From: Emma Morrison <e[redacted]
Sent: 20 May 2020 16:22
To: Michael Fishpool <[redacted]
Cc: Fergus Sykes <[redacted]
Subject: RE: George and Dragon, London Road, Swanscombe, DA10 0LQ

Dear Michael,

Your email of 20 April raised concerns about the loss of the public house at London Road, Swanscombe. They generally related to:

- the duration of the marketing exercise;
- the justification for the asking price; and
- the validity of marketing during social distancing.

The marketing of the site began in August 2019. It is considered that 9 months' active marketing with no interest in the site for a public house occupier should be sufficient to demonstrate that there is no reasonable likelihood of the site being occupied as a pub in the near future. Whilst it is acknowledged that the marketing period is somewhat less than desired, The Glossary to the Development Policies DPD states that effective marketing means *"continuous proactive marketing for an appropriate period,* ***but not exceeding*** *12 months." [my emphasis]* therefore 12 months is a desirable maximum, but not stated as a strictly minimum requirement and site specific concerns can be taken into account here. This was confirmed in the pre-application advice received by the Applicant, and further justification is provided within the Design and Access Statement submitted in support of the application. There are other factors that should be considered in this matter, not least the continued vacancy of the land, and the need for investment in Swanscombe in the current climate (as for towns across the Country). It is likely that vacancy rates will be increasing across the Country as a result of the recession caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, to have the potential occupation of a currently vacant site is not to be dismissed, even if it is not for a community use which may be considered preferable.

It is not considered that the local community will be adversely affected by the loss of the public house, with alternative premises approximately 230 metres to the south of the site (The Wheatsheaf) and other public houses within Swanscombe which are further away, but still within easy reach for local residents.

It should also be considered that the Government has granted temporary rights for public houses to operate as takeaway (Class A5) uses until 23 March 2021 through the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) Order 2020 to help to serve local communities while social distancing is in action – it is expected that takeaways will be important community services for some time to come as restaurants reopen as takeaways and social distancing continues. Thus, the George & Dragon could be occupied as a Class A5 hot food takeaway by the applicant (and therefore the public house use would temporarily be lost) under the current temporary PD rights until March 2021 with only the need to inform the Council of their intention.

In terms of the asking price, Sidney Phillips, the estate agent marketing the property is a reputable agency with 7 regional offices which specialises in licenced premises sales. The valuation has been based on the prevailing market conditions and site-specific considerations on the basis of their specialist knowledge. As such, it is considered that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it can be trusted that the asking price as justified within the Marketing Report is appropriate for the site.

As to the question of whether marketing during the 'lockdown' should count due to social distancing, it is our experience that acquisitions are continuing, albeit they are progressing at a slower pace, with potential purchasers still able (and often more likely) to peruse commercial property sites on the internet from their home and make the necessary enquiries. It is ultimately more important at this time to remove barriers to economic development where appropriate and to discount marketing during this time would, to me, appear obstructive.

It is considered that the proposed change of use would enable the reoccupation of a vacant unit, providing a new service to the local community which will continue to be well served by alternative public houses. Therefore the proposals comply with the aims of Policy DP21.

Apologies for the delay in coming back to you on this. I hope the information is acceptable but look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Kind regards,

Emma Morrison
Planning Assistant
Pegasus Group
PLANNING | DESIGN | ENVIRONMENT | ECONOMICS | HERITAGE
First Floor | South Wing | Equinox North | Great Park Road | Almondsbury | Bristol | BS32 4QL
[redacted]
Birmingham | Bracknell | Bristol | Cambridge | Cirencester | East Midlands | Leeds | Liverpool | London | Manchester | Newcastle |
Peterborough | Dublin

www.pegasusgroup.co.uk

Pegasus Group is the trading name of Pegasus Planning Group Ltd [07277000] registered in England and Wales.
This email and any associated files, is intended for the exclusive use of the addressee only.
If you are not the intended recipient you should not use the contents nor disclose them to any other person.
If you have received this message in error please notify us immediately. We have updated our Privacy Statement in line with the GDPR; please click here to view it.

Please consider the environment before printing this email message.
IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING PEGASUS GROUP & CORONAVIRUS / COVID-19